

Major Isaac Roach

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A

BRIEF SKETCH

OF THE

PUBLIC SERVICES

OF

MAJOR ISAAC ROACH.

COMPILED AT THE SOLICITATION OF A NUMBER OF CITIZENS OF SOUTHWARK.

216678

PHILADELPHIA:
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1838.

PUBLIC MEETING.

DISTRICT OF SOUTHWARK.

Wednesday, February 7th, 1838.

At a meeting of the personal friends of Major ISAAC ROACH, held at the house of Alexander Makenzie, corner of Almond and Swanson streets, the meeting was organized by appointing CHARLES PENROSE, Esq. Chairman, and GEORGE C. STEVENSON, Secretary.

Mr. Peter Williamson submitted the following preamble and resolutions, seconded by Thomas D. Grover :

Whereas, It having been ascertained that Major Isaac Roach has consented to become a candidate for the office of Sheriff of the city and county of Philadelphia, at the election to be held in October next, and as many of our younger fellow citizens are not familiar with the public services of Major Roach, during the last war—Therefore, be it

Resolved, That a committee of ten citizens be appointed to obtain from authentic sources, and report at a subsequent meeting, such information as they may deem advisable to lay before our Fellow Citizens of the city and county, as may tend to secure the election of Major Roach.

Resolved, That Major Roach being a native of Southwark, and his whole life known to most of us, we can with full confidence recommend him to the public as a *man* in every respect highly qualified to fill the important office of Sheriff.

The above resolutions were unanimously adopted.

The following named gentlemen were appointed said committee:—Thomas D. Grover, Jesse Williamson, Hugh Cavanaugh, Captain George Robinson, Robert Solts, Joseph Myers, Philip Peltz, Joseph Ash, Joseph Huddell, and George Esler.

Resolved, That the Chairman and Secretary be added to the above committee.

Resolved, That when this meeting adjourns, it adjourn to meet at the call of the Chairman.

On motion, adjourned.

C. PENROSE, Chairman.

GEO. C. STEVENSON, Secretary.

ADJOURNED MEETING.

Friday, February 16th, 1838.

The friends of Major ROACH met at the house of Alexander Makenzie, agreeably to adjournment. CHARLES PENROSE, Esq. in the chair.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and adopted.

The committee appointed at the previous meeting of the friends of Major Roach, report: that agreeably to their instructions, they have obtained a brief statement of his public services, which they now submit to the consideration of this meeting.

The report was unanimously adopted.

Mr. Grover submitted the following resolution, seconded by Peter Williamson:

Resolved, That the report be published, together with the proceedings which gave rise to the appointing of the committee, with such other information as the committee may deem advisable.

Resolved, That the committee be authorised to call meetings of the friends of Major Roach whenever they may deem it expedient.

On motion, adjourned.

C. PENROSE, Chairman.

GEO. C. STEVENSON, Secretary.

A B R I E F S K E T C H
O F T H E
P U B L I C S E R V I C E S
O F
M A J O R I S A A C R O A C H .

ISAAC ROACH was born in the District of Southwark and County of Philadelphia, on the 24th February, 1786. His maternal family was Irish. His paternal grandfather was born in Scotland and emigrated to this country as early as 1740.

His father, who was originally a native of Delaware, and a seaman by occupation, immediately on the commencement of hostilities between the Colonies and Great Britain, entered the naval service of his country, and continued in it till the war of Independence was over. There is now before us his commission as First Lieutenant in the Navy of Pennsylvania, bearing the original signature of the illustrious Franklin, then President of the Committee of Safety. It is as follows :

“ In Committee of Safety.

“ To Isaac Roach, gent.

“ We, reposing especial trust and confidence in your Patriotism, Valour, Conduct, and Fidelity, Do by these Presents constitute and appoint you to be First Lieutenant of the Provincial

armed Boat called the Franklin, fitted out for the protection of the Province of Pennsylvania, and the commerce of the River Delaware, against all hostile enterprises, and for the Defence of AMERICAN LIBERTY : you are therefore to take the said Boat into your charge, and carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of First Lieutenant, by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging ; and we do strictly charge and require all officers, soldiers, and mariners, under your command, to be obedient unto your orders as First Lieutenant, and you are to observe and follow such orders and directions from time to time as you shall receive from the assembly or Provincial Convention, during their sessions, or from this or a future Committee of Safety for this Province, or from your superior officer, according to the rules and discipline of war, pursuant to the trust reposed in you ; this commission to continue in force until revoked by the assembly, a Provincial Convention, or this or any succeeding Committee of Safety.

By order of the Committee.

B. FRANKLIN,
President."

WM. GOULT, Sect.

Philadelphia, 16th February, 1776.

Lieut. Roach commanded the armed vessel or gun-boat Congress, and was actively engaged all the war in the naval defence of the Delaware river and bay. He was also an officer in the action between the Hyder Ali and the British ship General Monk. The Brig which Lieut. Roach commanded was captured by the enemy. He succeeded however in retaking her, and in the attempt was dangerously wounded. He held commissions successively under Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison, and, with the exception of a few years after the Peace, was in active service till his death, in 1817.

The example of such a parentage was not without its influence in the formation of the character and guidance of the conduct of the immediate subject of this sketch. Taught from ear-

liest infancy to believe that next to what is due to a bountiful Providence, the main duty is that of the citizen to the State, the child of a revolutionary sire could find no sacrifice so great, no privation so severe as to deter him from the full discharge of this, his chief obligation. We shall have occasion presently to see what was the maturity of these precepts.

ISAAC ROACH, the younger, (the subject of this brief memoir,) after receiving such an elementary education as the times afforded, and the limited means of his parents enabled them to give him, was bound apprentice to a Ship Joiner, in his native District of Southwark, at which occupation he continued to work till he attained the age of twenty-six. In mechanical pursuits he found occupation suited to the active habit of his mind and physical constitution, and those who knew him (and there are many amongst us) when he labored from sunrise to sunset as a tradesman in the ship yard, will testify to his indefatigable industry and unwearying energy.

Before the declaration of war by the United States, in 1812, and in that interval of doubt when no one was able to discern the issue of peaceful negotiation for the redress of injury, or the atonement of insult—when our neutral commerce was destroyed, and our national flag degraded by European belligerents—when our Government was pausing on the question whether it should submit, or attempt desperately to redress its wrongs, and when no portion of the public mind was quite prepared for the last resort, except our gallant and chivalric youth: young Roach, immediately after the attack of the Leopard on the Chesapeake, with some of his friends, organised a corps of volunteer artillery, and joined the regiment then commanded by Colonel Connelly, and afterwards by our venerable fellow citizen, Colonel John Goodman, of the Northern Liberties. It was in this company, under the command of the present General Prevost, that Roach and his gallant and lamented associate, M'Donough, commenced their military life.

Anxious, however, for a participation in more active^d duty, immediately on the declaration of war, our young volunteer applied for a commission in the regular service, and obtained the appointment of Second Lieutenant in the second regiment of United States Artillery, under the command of Colonel Winfield Scott. In July, 1812, he joined the regiment, then forming on the east bank of the Schuylkill, and was appointed Adjutant.

Early in September, 1812, Colonel Scott applied for and obtained orders to proceed to the Canadian frontier, with the companies of Captain Towson and Captain J. N. Barker, and on the 5th October, this little band, to which Lieutenant Roach was attached, amounting all told to one hundred and sixty men, arrived at Buffalo. Never, perhaps, did young soldiers commence a career more darkly shadowed with gloom. Hull's surrender at Detroit was fresh in the public mind, and the prospect of our military character being redeemed was brightened only by reliance on the gallantry of the new troops and new officers who were then taking the field.

The first and one of the most brilliant actions that occurred on the Niagara frontier took place soon after the arrival of our Philadelphia troops at Buffalo. It was of a character to deserve more minute commemoration than will be consistent with the limits of this brief sketch of personal adventure. HENRY CLAY, in his speech on the new army bill, in 1813, speaking of the exploit we are now about to describe, said that "whether placed to maritime or land account for judgment, skill and courage IT HAD NEVER BEEN SURPASSED."

Fort Erie was at this time in the undisturbed possession of the British, and directly under its guns lay at anchor two large vessels of war, the *Detroit* and the *Caledonia*, destined to cruise against any naval force that might be raised on the Lake. Lieutenant Elliott, of the U. S. Navy, then commanding at Buffalo,

conceived the design of cutting out and capturing these vessels, and as soon as the plan was known, young Roach, with the consent of his commanding officer, volunteered to join the expedition. His offer was gladly accepted, and it was determined that he should go in one of the attacking boats with Elliott, and be accompanied by fifty volunteer artillerymen from his own regiment. In making this arrangement the chief difficulty was how to select the requisite number of volunteers from among so many who were willing and anxious to go. When the troops were drawn up in line, and the word was given by Colonel Scott for those to advance who were willing to accompany Adjutant Roach on this expedition, every man rushed forward, and it was only after great difficulty, and increasing the number from fifty to sixty, that the selection was finally made. When the Adjutant passed along the line, with his Serjeant Major, to choose his men, expressions of anxiety to accompany him were heard from the lips of all his soldiers. "*Can't I go, sir?*"—"Take me, Adjutant,"—"Don't forget M-Gee,"—"I'm a Philadelphia boy," and a variety of such expressions crowded on his ear, and while it evinced a most gratifying confidence in him who was to command, made it no easy matter to make a choice when all desired and all deserved to go. Nor was this solicitude confined to the men. The officers, one and all, including those of higher rank than the young Adjutant, crowded round and expressed their anxiety to go, and finally, when after the dispute between the gallant Barker and Towson, as to who should go along, was determined by lot in favor of the latter, and a difficulty on the score of rank was suggested, Towson was only prevented from resigning his captain's commission and acting as a volunteer citizen, by an arrangement that he should have command of the boat which was to attack the Caledonia, while Roach should accompany Elliott against the larger vessel, the Detroit.

Every thing being in readiness, the boats manned, arms ready, the oars muffled, at about eight o'clock of the night of the 8th of October, the expedition hauled out from the creek below Buf

falo. The boats were pushed silently up against the rapid current of the Niagara to the mouth of Buffalo creek. The plan was to row thence up into Lake Erie till they reached the opposite shore, above the Fort, and thus advance to the attack from a quarter from which none would be expected. Here the expedition was joined by a detachment of the 5th infantry, under Ensign Prestman. The tide on the bar being low, all hands were obliged to lighten, and wading up to their shoulders in the lake pushed the boats over. Having fairly got into the lake, the boats were rowed several miles up along the American shore before a crossing was made. The expectation was that the vessels would be taken by surprise, but the light which was burning in the caboose of the Detroit, whilst it enabled the assailants to steer directly to their object, showed them they had a vigilant adversary to contend with. When within half a mile of the brig, orders were given to the men to be silent, and to reserve their fire till they should board. The helm was taken by Adjutant Roach, and orders given to have the grapplings ready the moment the boat was laid alongside. As the boats approached within musket range they were hailed from the brig, and no answer being given, were received with a heavy but ill-directed fire of musketry.—Roach laid the boat directly alongside the brig, head to tide, and after grappling her securely, with Lieutenant Elliott, and followed by his gallant crew, sprang upon the enemy's quarter-deck. A fierce but short personal conflict decided the question in favor of the assailants, who soon had complete possession of the brig. The attack by Towson and his comrades on the Caledonia, though accidentally less propitious in the onset, owing to a mistake in steering the boat, was equally successful, and thus the two armed British brigs were completely captured.

Until this time the British garrison did not seem to realise the danger of their friends. No sooner, however, was the first movement made to get under way than a heavy cannonade was opened on the brigs, which the American victors were wholly unable to return with any effect. The first guns fired at the enemy on

that frontier were those fired by Roach and his comrades from the Detroit. It may be mentioned incidentally, that the first shot fired from the British lines during the war, owing to its elevation, passed over the Detroit, at which it was aimed, and killed a gallant officer on the American shore, (Major Cuyler, of the New York Militia.) The wind becoming lighter, the brig's crew, instead of being able to get out into the lake and out of gunshot, were obliged to sheer over to the opposite shore, all the time within the range of the guns from the Fort, and in attempting to get into harbor both vessels grounded on the bar. Rather than that the enemy should have the satisfaction of destroying the prizes, for which they were known to be making active preparations, orders were given by the commanding general to burn one or both in case they could not be set afloat. The Detroit was accordingly destroyed. The Caledonia being a lighter vessel was saved, and was subsequently added to the fleet of the gallant Perry.

The attempt to "cut out" an enemy where the attacking party are compelled to climb up the perpendicular sides of vessels of war, from small boats, and opposed at every step by men as desperate as themselves, is a daring enterprise, and Captain Marryatt says "it is considered, in the British Navy, the most desperate of all services."

The annals of the war present no more brilliant incident than that which has just been described. A mere handful of raw recruits, not one of whom had ever faced an enemy, or been in battle, within three days after their arrival near a scene of action, volunteering and succeeding in an enterprise of an almost desperate character in itself, and against veteran soldiers. Such was the character of this first incident in the military life of our gallant townsman. It produced a great sensation, and the happiest effect among the troops then beginning to concentrate on the Niagara, and redounded to the honor of all who were engaged in it, and of no one more than our young soldier.

This brilliant victory was scarcely achieved before Lieutenant Roach was engaged in active and perilous service as a volunteer in another quarter. It being contemplated by the Commanding General Van Rennsalear, at Lewiston, to attack the British posts at Queenston, Colonel Scott determined to march his corps and transport his artillery to that point. The condition of the roads being such as to delay, if not entirely prevent, the transportation of ordnance from Buffalo, Lieutenant Roach proposed to have it carried down the river as far as navigable in boats. The suggestion was readily adopted, and by his exertions, and under his supervision, carried into effect.

The second regiment of artillery arrived at Lewiston about two hours before the troops embarked for the attack on Queenston Heights. It was the plan of General Van Rennsalear that but few of the regular troops should cross, and that the attack should be made altogether by the militia. Colonel Scott's regiment was therefore ordered to remain on the American shore, and to cover with their artillery the crossing of the boats. The attack was made with great spirit and success, and a desperate conflict ensued on the heights above the town. The British commander-in-chief, General Brock, and his aid, Major Macdonald, were killed, and the fortune of war was for a long time with our gallant troops. The names of Fenwick and Van Rennsalear will always be associated with this brilliant exploit. Within a short time after the attack commenced, and while Roach and his commanding officer were directing the artillery on the American shore, a message was received from General Van Rennsalear that he had occasion for an officer of artillery. Roach immediately volunteered, and dismounting, threw himself into the boat that was waiting, and was in a few moments on British soil, and in the thickest of the fight, which was by this time raging with renewed fury, in consequence of the enemy having been reinforced by new troops, composed of regulars and Indians, from Fort George and the neighborhood. In the midst of the action, Lieutenant Roach was severely wounded by a rifle ball, fired from an adjacent

thicket. His uniform and plume made him a conspicuous object for the hidden savages. The surgeons being unable to attend to the wounded on the field, they were removed to the American shore, where due attention was paid to them. The exposure incident to this affair, and his wound, brought on a severe fever, which reduced Lieutenant Roach to the brink of the grave, and seriously impaired his constitution. His inability to attend to duty, and the suspension of active operations on the lines for the season, induced our young soldier to apply for orders for Philadelphia, at that time the head quarters of his regiment, Colonel Scott having been taken prisoner at Queenston. This request was immediately granted, and on the 26th of December, 1812, he returned to his aged parents at Philadelphia; bringing them in the honors he had gained a full consolation for his wounds and sufferings.

Almost immediately after his return, Roach was attached to the staff of General Izard, and accompanied that officer to New York, whither he was despatched to command the defences of that city and harbor. Finding this mode of life unsuited to his enterprising habits, he set out for Washington, and in person applied to the Secretary at War for duty on the Canadian frontier. General Armstrong not only acceded to this wish, but tendered him a captain's commission in the 23d infantry, which was promptly accepted, and in May, 1813, Roach was again with his army on the lines. Our troops were then stationed at and in the neighborhood of Fort Niagara—the enemy across the river at Fort George. Soon after, it being determined to attack the enemy's position, Captain Roach, though an infantry officer, was selected by Colonel Scott to take charge of a small field piece, and join the advance which was to make the assault. After several days heavy cannonading from the batteries on each side, our troops crossed the river, and after a very severe conflict, carried Fort George. In the attack, Captain Roach was again severely wounded in the right arm, this being the second time within

twelve months, and each time when in the foremost rank of an attacking party.

On the afternoon of June 23d, an order came to Fort George for a portion of the troops to join a party which was to march up the Niagara, under command of Colonel Borstler. Captain Roach, though but partially convalescent, and scarcely able to draw his sword, joined the party, which during that night commenced its march. The disastrous events of the next day need not be detailed here. They are matter of history. After advancing to some distance beyond Queenston, the American troops were attacked by a large body of British and Indians. The gallantry and untiring resolution of all the subordinate officers displayed in a conflict which lasted from 9, A. M. to 12, M., with an overwhelming force, could not save this devoted corps from the effect of the incapacity of the commanding officer, who, after a late retreat had been commenced, surrendered to the enemy without a word of consultation with his officers. During the whole day, Roach's corps had been in action, and had succeeded in repelling the enemy at every point from which they had attempted an attack. The prisoners, after being plundered and otherwise maltreated by the Indian auxiliaries of the enemy, were taken to the British head quarters, at Burlington heights, and soon after, all except Roach were discharged on parole. He being unwilling to pledge his word not again to bear arms against the enemy, and thinking that a chance of escape might occur, remained a prisoner, and being put on board the fleet, was thence removed to Kingston, and finally to Montreal and Quebec—the impregnable fortress and key of Lower Canada.

The narrative of Captain Roach's sufferings and escape from this celebrated fortress is one of deep and most romantic interest, to which the limits of this brief sketch will scarcely enable us to do justice. Still it is so rich with characteristic incident, that our readers will permit us to dwell on it somewhat in detail.

There are few fortified places in the world—none on this continent—more completely impregnable than Quebec. Situated at the intersection of the rivers St. Charles and St. Lawrence, the heights of Cape Diamond, on which the citadel is placed, rise in imposing grandeur directly from the edge of the water on the east. The passage below the cliffs on all sides is very narrow, and on the side of the precipitous hills, and within high parapets, is situated the upper town of Quebec. The visiter who, when on a tour of pleasure, for the first time views the sombre majesty of this scene, can best realise what must have been the feelings of Roach and his gallant companions when they saw what they thought this spot of hopeless imprisonment. The chance of escape seemed inappreciably small; upwards of four thousand troops composed the garrison, and so soon as the brief season of summer in these northern latitudes should pass away, they had to anticipate the horrors of a Canadian winter, during which all the comforts of domestic luxury are requisite to sustain physical existence. These were the prospects of our Philadelphia soldier when he first set foot beneath the parapet of the citadel of Cape Diamond, and near the spot consecrated by the blood of the heroic Montgomery.

After enduring certain preliminary indignities which seemed to be the certain portions of our American captives, Roach and his companions, some of them of higher rank and greater age, were admitted to a partial parole, and on giving their word not to violate the laws, or attempt an escape, were stationed at Beauport, a small Canadian village, on the left bank of the St. Lawrence, about five miles below Quebec. The river St. Charles empties into the St. Lawrence, some distance above Beauport. The fellow prisoners of Captain Roach at Beauport, were Generals Winchester, Chandler, and Winder, Colonel Lewis, and the venerable Major Madison, of Kentucky, Major Vandeventer, of the Army, and Lieutenant Sidney Smith, of the U. S. Navy. These two last were destined to be his companions in scenes of new adventure and enterprise. Besides these there were seve-

ral other officers, and a considerable body of rank and file, all prisoners of war.

Some time prior to the month of October, 1813, the privileges which the prisoners had previously enjoyed had been gradually restricted ; some of the officers had been removed to Halifax, and in consequence of an offer having been made by General Scott to the Governor of Lower Canada, Sir George Prevost, to exchange an officer of higher rank for Captain Roach, he was more vigilantly watched, and considered as one whom it was most desirable to control. On the 23d October, 1813, whilst the mess of paroled prisoners were seated at table, the house was surrounded by a body of cavalry, whose commanding officer informed the inmates that he had an order for the close confinement of twenty-three commissioned and as many non-commissioned officers, as hostages. Captain Roach was third on the list; his friends, Vandeventer and Sidney Smith, were to share his prison. In his own mind his course was soon determined on, and the British Major was informed by Roach that from that moment the obligation of the parole was at an end, and that as a prisoner he should have a prisoner's privilege of being at liberty to try to escape. Acting with this design, our young countryman availed himself of a few moments private conversation with his venerable friend, Major Madison, who was not on the list of hostages, and who was therefore to remain at Beauport, to arrange a plan of confidential correspondence—so that, by means of apparently casual and innocent phrases, secret meaning might be conveyed. Some of these cabalistic phrases may here be cited as specimens of all, and as matter of curious reminiscence. “Present my regards to General Winchester,” was to mean, “I have determined to escape.” “My friends, Major Vandeventer and Captain Smith, are well,” meant “They are to join me in the attempt.” “Present my respects to our kind friends at Beauport,” meant “Obtain a guide and boat to cross the St. Lawrence.” There were many others like these, not necessary to cite in this place.

The prison-house to which the captives were transferred, was not within the military defences of Cape Diamond, but was a strong stone building, used as the common gaol, on the south side of the city, between the St. Johns and St. Louis gate. It was built on a rocky declivity, being three stories high on one side, and five on the other. The indignity of their situation, as well as its hardship, did not serve to render the prisoners more disposed to remain where they were. Accordingly, no sooner were they immured than they began to plan some mode of escape. After much consultation and great difference of opinion as to the mode, one being in favor of mining out under the walls, and another of some different plan, it was finally determined that the attempt should be made by the prisoners letting themselves down from the roof, next to which their chamber was, to the street, by strips of carpet tied together. The plan was that Roach was to direct the immediate escape from the fortress, and that after they got out, Major Vandeventer should take command. If a boat could be secured, and the passage of the river (then full of floating ice) made, they were to take what is called Craig's Road, through the township settlements, and gain the wilderness which lies near the Canada and Maine boundaries.

The peculiar peril of this enterprise is scarcely conceivable. Besides the risk of discovery, and the personal danger in escaping from such a height, a strong guard was quartered about one hundred yards on the left of the house, and five sentinels, with loaded muskets, were in and around the prison. The gates of the city were closely guarded, and the bridge across the St. Charles river was closed by a gate which was never opened after night. The passage of the river, at any time hazardous, was peculiarly so at this season of commencing winter ; and even if escape were practicable through the Canadian settlements, the chance of perishing in the wilderness was very great. Still these discouragements, backed as they were by the remonstrances of their friends at Beauport, who secretly wrote to implore them not to attempt an escape, were insufficient to deter our gallant

countrymen. A letter, written as agreed upon, was sent, however, by Captain Roach to Major Madison, and carried by a British officer, who little suspected its contents, requesting him to secure a boat to cross the river, and a guide to lead the party through the settlements. The night of Saturday, November 27th, was fixed for the attempt.

Preliminary arrangements were soon made ; each of the three had his haversack filled with provisions, a letter was written to the Mayor of the city, exonerating the guard and all other British subjects from any knowledge or participation in the scheme, and the carpet which had been used in their room, and which had been taken up on pretence of having it cleaned, was ripped and tied into knots, to be used for the descent. The iron grating at the windows had already been removed by watch-spring saws. As soon as the officer had gone his rounds for the night, the conspirators were at work, and watching the time when the back of the sentry was turned, one end of the carpet was lashed to a rafter, and the other let down to the street. No sooner was this done, than Roach swung himself down, and was immediately followed by his two companions. All reached the ground safely but Major Vandeventer, who after sliding down a considerable distance, and thinking himself near the ground, relinquished his hold of the carpet, and fell. He received a severe bruise and sprain, which subsequently added not a little to the troubles and difficulties of the party. No sooner had they reached the ground and remained long enough hidden behind a corner of the wall to allow the sentinel to pass, whose faculties were no doubt somewhat benumbed by the cold, which was in painful contrast with the Spanish climate he had been so long enjoying, than they made the best of their way through the streets to the St. Johns gate. As they approached they walked leisurely by the sentry, who after a challenge, supposing them to be people of the town, allowed them to go by without molestation. After passing the several gates, they at last crossed the bridge over the ditch, and then, for the first time, did they breathe freely, or dare to flatter themselves with the hope of success.

The road to Beauport was frozen and rough, and Major Vandeventer's lameness retarded the party considerably. No time was to be lost, and Captain Roach pushed on in advance to ascertain how they could best cross the river St. Charles. On approaching the bridge he found the gate fastened and the keeper apparently asleep. It at once suggested itself that if they could pass unobserved, it might tend to defeat the pursuit of which they knew they would soon be the objects. On examining the gateway it was found that the only mode of escape was by climbing outside at a considerable distance above the water and at great risk. This was at last accomplished, and soon after they crossed the river the fugitives heard the drums beating to arms, and the bells ringing in Quebec, their escape having been discovered. A party of cavalry was despatched in the direction of Beauport, and on arriving at the St. Charles Bridge, and after arousing the gate-keeper, being told that no one had, or could have passed, they returned to the city—so effectual was the stratagem of the fugitives.

The history of the rest of this adventure may be briefly told. On arriving at Beauport they found their friends prepared, though scarcely daring to expect their arrival. A guide had been procured, and a boat to cross the St. Lawrence. No time was to be lost, as the passage must be made under cover of darkness, and in a short time our three daring soldiers were afloat on the St. Lawrence, here nearly four miles wide, and filled with floating ice. After narrowly escaping several boats filled with armed men, who had been despatched in pursuit, they reached the south bank of the river; the snow was then fast falling, and not only was their guide unwilling to proceed farther, but Major Vandeventer's lameness had so much increased, as to compel them to remain quiet for a few hours. They accordingly, soldier-like, scooped themselves out a place of repose in the snow, and lying close to each other, slept soundly till daylight. They then resumed their march, and having narrowly escaped different parties of regulars and militia who were in pursuit, succeeded in crossing the Chaudiere, and gaining the road to the settlements.

Following this route, through a great variety of perils, and at much risk, suffering from the excessive cold, and being but inadequately protected from the weather, they hoped to reach the wilderness that lies between the British and American settlements, and then defy pursuit. In the excitement of the escape from their prison, they seemed to lose sight of the imminent danger of perishing from cold and privation in the almost trackless wilderness which they were so anxious to reach. Fortune, however, ordained it otherwise. On the fourth day after leaving Quebec, they reached the house of a Canadian named Charledeauluce, the last habitation north of the wilderness. Here they were obliged to remain all night, in consequence of the increasing illness of one of the party, Lieutenant Smith, who had been severely frost-bitten the first night after crossing the St. Lawrence, and the difficulty of obtaining an Indian guide to conduct them farther. Whilst engaged negotiating with their host for such assistance on the following day, the house was surrounded by a large body of Canadian militia, sent in pursuit, and our gallant adventurers, after all their sufferings and dangers, were obliged to surrender, and with the best grace they could assume, submit to their hard fate.

Such was the issue of this most gallant and romantic adventure, projected by Captain Roach, and executed by the energy and resolution of himself and his companions. To escape from the walls of an impregnable citadel, and to elude a garrison of four thousand of Wellington's veteran troops—to cross a river like the St. Lawrence, filled with floating ice, in a leaky and crazy canoe—to penetrate for seventy miles, in the dead of a Canadian winter, through a country filled with exasperated pursuers—to endure all the hardships of such an attempt under such circumstances—required an amount of daring and heroic endurance which deserved complete success. It is a tale full of romantic interest.

Their return to Quebec was the signal for new privations and

indignities The British authorities, incensed at even the partial success of this attempt to escape, and stung to madness by the reflection that three Americans had eluded all their vigilance, and defied all their care, could find no restraint too severe for their prisoners. All the Americans were closely immured, and even the poor comforts they had before enjoyed were now denied them. The access of all friendly visitors was cut off, and their fate seemed destined to be made darker and darker still.* Such treatment instead of disheartening our young soldiers seemed to give a new impulse to exertion and adventure. A new scheme of escape was projected and agreed on by Roach and Vandeventer, and some measures taken to carry it into execution, when an order came from Sir George Prevost to release the three hostages on *parole*. A higher tribute could not be paid to the subject of this narrative and his friends than was involved in this expression of superior confidence in the honor of an American officer, to the bars and bolts of the prison house from which they had once released themselves.

The rest of this dreary winter was passed within the walls of Quebec, and it was not until the following December (1814) that an exchange of prisoners took place, and Captain Roach and his companions returned home.

Roach immediately joined his old commander, now Major General Scott, and was preparing again to take the field, with the rank of Assistant Adjutant General, when the news of peace arrived. On both the reductions of the army Captain Roach was retained, and continued in active duty, commanding at Fort McHen-

* An incident to this scene of suffering deserves to be commemorated here. During their confinement, the American prisoners had received great kindness and attention from some of the Catholic clergy of Quebec. On the return of Roach and his friends to their prison, an order was issued to prevent any one from visiting them. The Reverend Mr. Mignault coming one morning to the prison, was told that the Governor had ordered that no one should be admitted. "What!" said this good man, "the minister of God refused to visit the sick and the prisoner! Open that door instantly, and let Sir George Prevost dare to prevent my entrance here again!" This order was obeyed.

ry, Fort Columbus, and Fort Mifflin, until 1823, when having attained the rank of Major, he resigned his commission and returned to private life.

Since that time, Major Roach has been known amongst us as a public spirited and eminently respectable citizen, contributing his time and talents freely to the public service, and serving his fellow citizens with singular zeal and disinterestedness. His political opinions are at once decided and inoffensive. His personal demeanour in every respect decorous. His moral character without spot or blemish. His patriotism tried in a school that admits of no imposture.

These are some of ISAAC ROACH's claims on the favorable consideration of his fellow citizens. They have been briefly stated, and should be earnestly enforced on a community that never yet has turned a deaf ear to public merit and public service.

He is the child of a revolutionary sire—the son of a parent who shed his blood freely in his country's cause in the time which tried men's souls.

He is a native of the County of Philadelphia, and a Mechanic by occupation.

He was among the first who volunteered to meet the enemy on the declaration of war.

He was foremost in the first action on the Niagara frontier—and shared in the first victory gained there by American arms.

He was a volunteer in the attack on Queenston Heights, where the enemy were again defeated, and was dangerously wounded.

He was with the advancing party in the attack on Fort George, which also resulted in a brilliant triumph, and was again severely wounded.

He was again a volunteer, though not recovered from his wound, in the action of Beaver Dams, and defended his post for many hours against an overwhelming force of British and Indians.

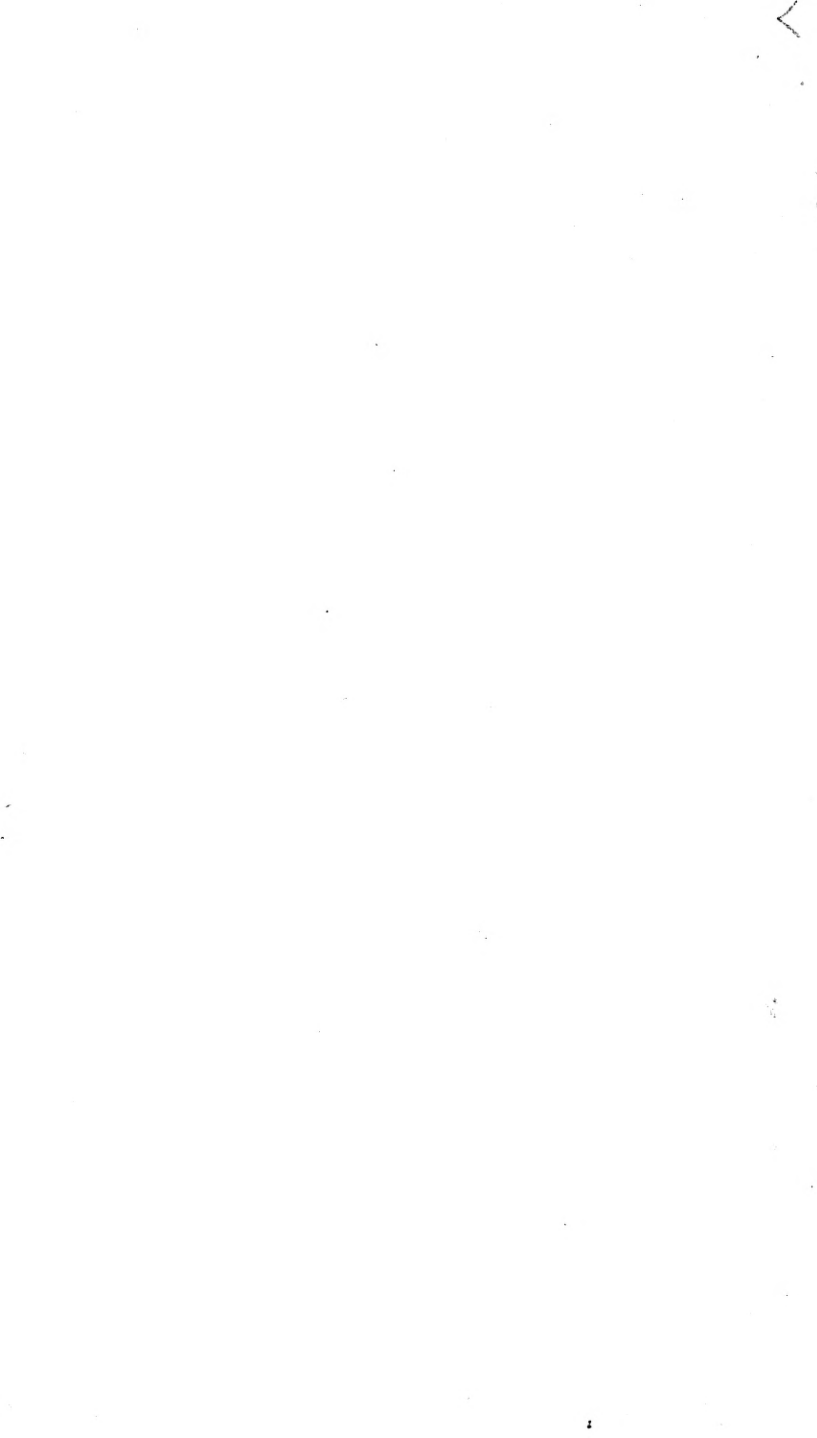
He was a prisoner of war for eighteen months within the walls of Quebec, exposed to hardships and sufferings that undermined his constitution, and impaired his health.

He was immured as a hostage for fourteen months during the greater part of two Canadian winters.

He made his escape in company with two gallant friends from an impregnable fortress, guarded by the flower of the British army, and travelled nearly one hundred miles through a hostile country, in the dead of winter, before he was retaken.

He was retained in the army after the war, and relinquished the service after attaining high rank, and in a time of profound peace.

He has been, and is, a public spirited citizen, known every where for his virtues and his services, and every where respected and beloved.





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